

“MERAJ” OF PROPHET MOHAMMED IN THE REFLECTION OF SOUTH AMERICAN ARAB MAHJAR POETRY

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with the creative activity of the prominent poets Fevzi al-Maluf and Shafig al-Maluf and information about their life has been given. In the article the features of the event of Meraj exercised by His Majesty Prophet Mohammed (s a v) who had been sent to the Earth by God are investigated in the poems of “Ala Bisati-r Rih” written by Fevzi al-Maluf and the poem “Abgar” written by Shafig al-Maluf.

KEYWORDS: Arab Mahjar Literature, Fevzi Al-Maluf, Shafig Al-Maluf, Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v), Event of Meraj, The Poetry “Ala Bisati-R Rih”, The Poetry “Abgar”

INTRODUCTION

At the end of XIX and the beginning of XX centuries as a result of unrest in the political-social situation and heavy economic difficulties created in the Middle East, the mass migration of Arabs from Syria and Lebanon to the American continent started. In this period arab mahjar literature, being an indivisible part of modern arabic literature was founded by arab writers having migrated to North and South America. Arab mahjar literature created by the arab writers, who were deeply acquainted with the both the western and eastern literature was completely different from the classic arab literature as to the both contents and form.

One of the poets having migrated to South America was famous poet, christian by birth Fevzi al-Maluf. Fevzi-al-Maluf was born on May 21, 1899 in Zahla district of Lebanon [1, p.756; 2]. His brothers named Shafig al-Maluf and Riyad al-Maluf being brought up in a family of intelligentsia were also the members of migration literature. His father Issa Iskender (Alexander) was a well-known historian of his time and a member of the Arabic language amalgamation [2]. His uncle Mishel Maluf had been the founder of literary amalgamation called “Al-Usbatu-l Andalusiiyya” (“Society of Andalusia”) [3]. His another uncle Geysar al-Maluf was a migration writer who had migrated to South America and in 1898 he published a newspaper called “Brazilia” in São Paulo [4]. Some of the investigators studying arab mahjar literature assimilated the family of Maluf with the family of the famous poet of pre-islamic period, one of the owner of seven muallagas¹ Zuheyr ibn Abu Sulma because Zuheyr ibn Abu’s sons as well as he himself had been prominent poets of the period.

¹ Muallaga – ancient type of Arabic poetry

Fevzi al-Maluf, who had received his education in “al-Madrasatu-l Shargiyya” (“Eastern school”) which was situated in Zahle, later on continued his education in Beirut and in this period he had been simultaneously busy with trading, but the first world war which broke out in 1914-1918 compelled him to stop his education and return to Zahle. Here, taking advantage of his father’s library, knowing different fields of sciences, the poet learned arabic, portuguese, french and spanish languages to perfection [5].

Fevzi al-Maluf for a period of time in Damascus worked as a director in “Daru-l Muallim” (“House of Teachers”) and as a deputy dean in Arabic Medical Institute [3]. Since this period Fevzi al-Maluf began his literary activity and his articles were published in different newspapers. He translated novels of European writers to the arabic language.

At the end of XIX and at the beginning of XX centuries as a result of economic and social crisis existing in Lebanon Fevzi al-Maluf, together with his family moved to São Paulo city of Brazil in 1921 [6,p.692;7,p.413]. Here, he worked in the silk workshop opened by his family. Alongside this he was busy studying arab literature and poetry. Charity loving poet took part in a number of economic and humanitarian projects. The writer here, though being far from his native land always thought of his country, of the youth of Arab, tried to bring them closer to one another. For this purpose he created a circle called “Zahle club” in 1922 in São Paulo [5]. The circle succeeded in gathering a lot of members around it.

The talented writer possessing rich life experience and literary knowledge in spite of the fact that he lived quite a short life, he managed to leave a valuable literary heritage behind himself. The poet, exercising serious health problems as a result of hazardous operation died in Rio de Janeiro city in 1930 [8].

The poet’s poetries were published in Beirut in 1957 under the name of “Divan-u Fevzi al-Maluf”. Always the feelings of pessimism, sadness are felt in the poems of the poet of melancholic spirits. In his poetry the themes of nature, religion, love, mystic thoughts have found their reflections. He found his freedom in his art of writing and reflected his thoughts artfully on a white sheet of paper with his pen.

In the creation of the writer pure and international feelings have been depicted. The writer expressing his feelings is capable to win them international meanings, namely the theme which the writer takes up is not limited with his own way of understanding the things, and they embrace all the living beings with which he can convey his feelings. The poet having lived a short, but meaningful life exercised pessimistic spirits. In his poems, too the feelings of pessimism, his dissatisfaction with this world and his life find their reflection. In some sources the cause of his pessimism is indicated with the fact associated with his unsuccessful love to a girl whom he failed to marry in the period in which he lived in Zahle.

The poet’s world was the world of loneliness. He is sorry for living in this world. Analyzing his poem “Beyna-l Mahd va-l Lahd” (“Between the Cradle and Grave”) it becomes clear that for the poet this world consists of torture and poignancy. In this poem he states that not only he himself but also all the other people have come to this world only for the purpose of exercising sufferings, troubles [9].

يولد الطفل للعذاب وهي

مسنة الدهر وفي الطفل شرّ

بين أوجاع أمه دخل المهد

وبين الأوجاع يدخل قبره

*A baby is born with sadness
Not to understand it is madness
With his mother's sufferings
He lies in cradle which his mother gave,
And with these sufferings he goes to grave.*

We see the expression of the reason why a baby is crying when opening his eyes to this world, in the work of “Leyli and Majnun” of famous Azerbaijani philosopher and poet Mohammed Fuzuli. The author states the fact that the hero of the work Majnun had been an extraordinary baby from the very birth. As all the other children Majnun too cries when he is born. But Fuzuli gives quite different meaning to his crying. He says that, Majnun cries because he knows what troubles are awaiting him in future [10, p.45-46].

*Recalling his final day beforehand
Shed his better tears, cried and
The one who is captive of his body
Can feel happy, but only nobody
He said “You, world of trouble
I know, your grief is much
There is no one to bear the grief as such
I came to suffer all the grief!
Now come, and test my belief!*

The book of poems which brought fame to Fevzi al-Maluf was the book called “Ala Bisati-r Rih” (“On the Flying Carpet”) dealing with his imaginary tour to the heavens, written in 1926, consisting of 14 chapters and 218 stanzas. [8]. The poem which was one of the best specimens of epic poetry was translated into a number of languages. Spanish poet Francisco Villiaspesa did the both, translated the poem into the Spanish language and wrote introduction to the poem [9; 11, p.9-50]. The writer from Egypt named Taha Hussein in one of his reports mentioned that he had been deeply impressed by the poem. [9; 12, p.120]

The poet while moving from one city to the other in Brazil had written during the flight forced by inspiration [13]. The poem for the first time in 1926 was published in one of the literary journals known by the name of “Shairu-n fi-t Tayyara” (“A Poet Written in a Plane”).

In this poem where the poet tried to express the feeling of loneliness, attempts to emancipate his spirits from the body, feeling of necessity for moral purification and the thoughts about death, all these are possibly felt in the creative activity of a number of representatives of classic Arabic literature. In the creation of Tarafa ibn al-Abd al-Bakri who had lived in the pre-Islamic period, Abu-l Atahiya (VIII century), Mutanabbi (X century), Abu-l Ala al-Ma'arri who had

considered their spirits to be captive of their ugly bodies, and in the creation of some other writers complaint from loneliness, pessimism, frailty are expressed.

While analyzing the poem “Ala Bisati-r Rih” (“On the Flying Carpet”) we clearly see that the poet had taken use of the “Meraj” which had taken place as a saint phenomenon in the Islamic religion. As the other writers of migration literature Fevzi al-Maluf too respected all the other religions, considered religion as one of the means to serve the humanity, always highly supported the principles of humanism and tolerance. As the other writers living in South America, he too respected the religion of Mohammed (s.a.v.²).

Another prominent poet of migration literature Shafiq al-Maluf the brother of Fevzi al-Maluf was born on March 31, 1905 in the Zahla district of Lebanon. The poet who lived in Lebanon, Syria and in Brazil in his youth [14] received his primary education in Zahle, later on he studied in “Kulliyyatu-sh Shargiyya” (“Eastern College”) [15, p.629]. Shafiq al-Maluf who came to Damascus in 1922 worked here as an editor of the journal “Alif-Ba” (“Alphabet”) till 1925. The poet has a small booklet consisting of 18 poetries called “Li Kulli Zahratin Abirun” (“Each flower has its scent”) [14].

Shafiq al-Maluf in 1926 migrated to São Paulo city of Brazil where his brother Fevzi al-Maluf and his uncles Mishel, Geysar and George al-Maluf [14] and as his brother Fevzi al-Maluf began to work in the silk workshop established by his family.

Different from a number of arab mahjar writers who had migrated to South America, Shafiq al-Maluf’s substantial state had always been good and he was not obliged to do hard work. After the death of his uncle Mishel Maluf for a time he headed the society called “Al-Usbat-ul Andalusiyya” (“Society of Andalusia”) established in Brazil [14]. Prominent writer died in Brazil in 1977 [16].

Shafiq al-Maluf who had rich literary heritage mainly wrote poems expressing longing for the native land. In his poems the poet had also given beautiful description of landscape. The writer left behind him specimens of prosaic writings and a booklet of poems called “Al-Ahlam” (“Dreams”).

The poet of romantic spirits valued religions as the salvation of the humanity and respected all the heavenly religions. Believing in the thoughts denoting the approach of the end of the world, the poet believed that the world wouldn’t be eternal.

Though the writer wrote poems on longing for the native land, on the philosophical themes, his epic poetry called “Abgar” is the one which made him famous in the world of literature. The poem for the first time was published in 1936 with the volume of 6 chapters, but in 1946 it was published in still wider volume consisting of 12 chapters [15, p.430-431]. The poem “Abgar” which brought a new spirit to modern arabic literature were translated into portuguese, spanish, french, russian and italian languages. In the poem it is dealt with the romantic-spirited poet’s tour to the world of dreams and with the feelings which he exercised there.

The poem “Abgar” since its publication arose great resonance in the Arab migration literature; it is felt that the writer had written that poem under the impression of Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.).

² Religious words in the Arabic language Sallallahu Aleyhi Vassallam meaning “May the blessing of God be on him” which is said each time after mentioning the name of the prophet Mohammed.

Before analyzing the elements of Meraj in the above-mentioned poems of poets Fevzi al-Maluf and Shafiq al-Maluf, let's get acquainted with this saint event in which Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) exercised.

Speaking of Meraj messenger of God Prophet Mohammed's (s.a.v.) taking Masjidul Haram to Masjidul Aqsa and from there his rise to God's abode is meant. Translation of the arabic word “Meraj” means “a means for rising up to the sky”, “a ladder” [18,p.322]. The word “Meraj” in the arabic language also means “to rise” “to go up” [19, p.203].

During the event of Meraj in which His Majesty Mohammed (s.a.v.) who was an example to the world of humanity by his behaviour, his wisdom, culture and moral and who was sent to this world, as the last prophet by God, exercised questions about death, life after death, existence of hell and paradise and other questions. Meraj is a wonder with which by God's will Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) lived. This wonder is higher and bigger than the human brain can understand. In the surahs of Holy Koran such as al-Isra and an-Najm (al-Isra 17/1 and an-Najm 53/7-18) the wonder with which Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) had lived, found its expression.

The event of Meraj took place when Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) lived in Mecca [20, p.214; 21, p.255; 22, p.51]. The Islamic Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) one night, having been mounted on a horse like animal called Burag by God's angel Gabriel (a.s.)³ was brought to “Masjid-ul Aqsa” (“Mosque of Aqsa”) [23,p.148; 24]. On his way Prophet Mohammed bid two ruket⁴ namaz together with Prophet Musa (Moisey) [22, p.52]. Then together with Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) angel Gabriel reach “Masjidul Aqsa”. In the Mosque Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) in front and other prophets behind him bid their namaz. After this two dishes with milk in one and wine in the other are brought to the messenger of God. His Majesty Mohammed (s.a.v.) chooses milk. After this Gabriel approves his choice and says that after this wine was considered haram (forbidden) for his people [23, p.148; 25; 26, p.141; 27,p.15].

Further on Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) by the assistance of Gabriel (a.s.) rises into heavens. Passing through seven layers of the heavens Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) in each layer met other prophets. Thus in the first layer the prophet met Adam (a.s.), in the II Prophet Jesus and Yahya (a.s.), in the III Joseph (a.s.), in the IV layer Idris (a.s.), V Harun (a.s.), VI layer Musa (Moisey) (a.s.) and in the VII layer Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) (a.s.) [28]. Then Prophet Mohammed visits Beytu-l Mamur which is visited by 70 thousand angels [29; 30, p.303-304]. Further on Gabriel (a.s.) brings Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) to Sidratul Muntaha [26, p.249]. Sidratul Muntaha is a tree with the shadow of which it embraces the 6th layer of the heavens with its roots but with the shadows of its branches it embraces the 7th layer of the sky. Here the angel Gabriel says that Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) would go the rest of the way without him. Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) on the green colour silk mattress rises up to the abode of God. Here he is stated by God on the three important for Muslims issues [31, p.157; 32, p.393-394]:

- Each day to bid namaz five times, the merits of which is equal to ten namaz;
- Amendment of the two final ayahs of al-Baqara (cow);
- The news on not remaining of each Muslim in the hell forever for those who do not deny God;

His Majesty Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) when coming back was shown the hell and the paradise and all of which took place. Alongside the beauty of the paradise seeing those who were punished for the sins they had committed the prophet says: “*If you knew all that I know, you would laugh little but cry much*” [23,p.210; 32,p.557].

³ a.s. aleyhissalam

⁴ ruket – praying by sitting on the knees

After Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) was shown paradise and hell, he returns to Mecca. Thus this wonder which the messenger of Allah exercised in a very short period of time alongside being possible by undeniable might of God, it is also a challenge inviting people to live in the right way.

On the Meraj of Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) Islamic scientists express different thoughts. As to some of them the prophet bodily, whereas other scientists thought that the prophet spiritually, while being in sleep had exercised the event of Meraj. If we take the fact into consideration that after his return from Meraj the people of Mecca demanded from him proofs on this event then it becomes clear that they suspected in his Meraj. But as it is known each prophet dreams about while sleeping and if he really had seen Meraj in sleep they would have believed in him easily. In the case when the event of Meraj can be hard to understand by human mind, the bodily rise of the Islamic prophet to the sky causes hesitations in their trust to the happening wonder, but by God's will the prophet while describing Guds (Jerusalem) to which he had never been and while describing the occurrences which took place that night, no suspicion remained on the bodily realization of this event. When Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) was asked to describe God he said: *"I saw just a light"*. The night of Meraj of His Majesty Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) once more proved that God exists, that God is just and mighty, that life after death exists, and that each person shall be paid for all his doings (deeds).

In the phenomenon of Meraj the understanding of time and place being different, the people of the time being unaware of modern science and discoveries had some difficulties in understanding the event of Meraj of Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) But this wonder which never happened without reason, and was set up by the will of God almighty, to day by the achievements of science is proved as possible.

Thus, it become clear as a result of scientific discoveries that understanding of the notion of time is not constant as it was supposed earlier. It became clear as a result of discovery of theory of probability worked out by Einstein the notions such as "now", "before", "after" are the same only for the events which take place close to one another and movement of time depends on the movements of the things (objects) [33, p.68].

Time doesn't act with the same speed everywhere. For example, any explosion taking place in the universe reaches our planet Earth later than any others. So the event which takes place in our planet as an event at present time seems to be in the past for another place. At present, as a result of achieved scientific successes people in a short period of time by cosmic means may travel to cosmos. Taking advantage of these principles we may say, that there shouldn't be any hesitation in believing Prophet Mohammed's (s.a.v.) Meraj (rise to the abode of God).

As Azerbaijani scientist-orientalist Aida Gasimova notes: *"During the event of Meraj Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) as if stands above the notion of time and exercises the time which unites different times as past and future [33, p.70]"*.

Besides, one of the situations causing our interest, while analyzing the event of Meraj is that Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) while being in the heavens during the event of Meraj hears the voice of Bilal who shall sing azan⁵ in the mosque to be built in Medina. After this event for the people who bid namaz the voice of azan would be a call for namaz. Famous astronaut Neal Armstrong while flying to the Moon in a spaceship called Apollo II in 1969 hears strange voice of music. Information about this is conveyed to the Earth and the voice transferred to the Earth by means of special radio apparatus is confidentialized. In 1983 Armstrong, who made a trip to Egypt during his report in a scientific conference hears a voice. When he was interested to know what sort of voice it was, he was said that a mosque was situated nearby

⁵azan: call for namaz

and it was just the voice of azan coming from the mosque. He in his turn states that he had heard that voice before, in the cosmos, being millions of kilometers far away from the earth. Later on one of the co-workers of NASA Syrian by nationality revealed this information and introduced the tape to the publicity [34, p.7]. The event which took place in XX century in which science rapidly developed, had taken place still in VII century and is one of the facts affirming the chosen by God the last Prophet Mohammed's (s.a.v.) Meraj.

The main goal of the religion of Islam, Prophet of this religion Mohammed (s.a.v.) and presentation of Holy Koran to the people of Islam as a biggest gift is to prove the existence of God, to prove that there exists no other God than Allah, to make people lead honest way of life, keep people away from doing dishonest actions, indignation, to make people not to share commitments with devils. The fact that religion of Islam and its Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) respected the other religions who accepted the prophets of other religions that recognized the freedom of word, freedom in the choice of religion, and freedom of honour is a vivid example of humanistic character of this religion. That's why the people seeing a person as a personality irrespective of race, national belonging, social status, not taking advantage of religion for personal profit, holding the principles of justice in all their actions higher, people desiring to see social equality, love, freedom, and each one not turning to the slave of his necessities perceives the might of God and respects God's messenger because those people better understand that the aim of all the heavenly religions is not to wage enmity among the people of the world, not to turn them to slaves, on the contrary the aim of all these religions is to ensure just and peaceful co-existence of all the people of the world.

A number of writers and poets who highly respected Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) and the religion which he propagandized, in their poems and works they praised him highly. This tradition started from the day in which the religion of Islam was founded and is still going on. Kab ibn Zuheyr who was known by his poetry “Burda” (“Cloak”) who lived in VII century, and in which praised the Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.), the other poets such as Hassan ibn Sabit, Kab ibn Malik, Kumeyt ibn Zeyd, Abu-l Hajjaj al-Balavi, Zamakhshari, Ibnu-d Dahhan, Yahya bin Yusif as-Sarsari, the author of the poetry “gasidat-ul Burda” known as the one to give recovery to people, Mohammed bin Said al-Busiri, Mahmud Sami al-Barudi, Ahmed Shovgi, Maruf ar-Rusafi, Mohammed Abdulgani Hasan and others are the writers to praise Islam and its prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.). Alongside them the other Christian writers such as Nazmi Luga, Labib ar-Riyashi, Khalil Juma at-Tuval, Rashid Salim al-Khuri, George Saydah, Riyad Maluf, Ilyas Farhad are the writers who wrote poems to praise religion of Islam and its prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.). The Azerbaijani philosopher and poet, well-known by his five poems called “Khamsa”, who lived in XII century Nizami Ganjavi too, in the part of “Merajname” of the poem “Leyli and Majnun” speaking of the event of Meraj stated of Prophet Mohammed's (s.a.v.) bodily Meraj [35,p.23-25]:

The breast of the time's too small for you

You raised to the last peak of sky too

You rose having passed just seven layers

You discovered the peak for us prayers

You did just the both – visited just God

And secret of the just for us just you told.

The impact of the event of Meraj which Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) exercised is clearly felt in the poem of migrant writer Fevzi al-Maluf's "Ala Bisati-r Rih". The contents of this poem are very interesting. The fact that he is sick and tired of all evils of this world is desirous to live in an imaginary new, utopian world. In his fancy pure world is in the heavens. In fact in the works of all the romantic poets there exists no concrete notion of time and place. For them these notions limit the world of their fancies and they find some difficulties in describing the world which they desire and in which they want to reside. Fevzi al-Maluf too vivifies the world, in which he desires to live, in his imaginations. This world of his is immense sky in which birds freely fly, the clouds move without obstacles and the most important of all is that in this sky he can stretch his hands freely to pray God. That's why the heart and spirits of the poet fly into the depth of the sky and makes a tour to the world of birds, stars and world of spirits. In the sky the poet having talked to himself, comes back to this world.

In fact that the sky is the symbol of purity has been stated in the mythology of ancient Greece and India. In a number of religious imaginations the fact the spirits leave the body of a dying person is believed. As it is stated in Holy Koran the facts that the prophet Jesus is raised up to the abode of God and his spirits is left there and Meraj of the Prophet Mohammed can be set as an examples to illustrate the above-mentioned thoughts.

While analyzing the poet's poem we can obviously witness that the poet has taken the use of the features of Meraj. Like Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) who had risen to perfection during the time of Meraj, the writer too longs for the purification of his spirits, for being morally pure in his poems.

It is worth mentioning that a number of investigators studying the arab mahjar literature say that Fevzi al-Maluf while writing his poem "Ala Bisati-r Rih" has taken the use of Dante's work "Divine Comedy". But Spanish scientist Asin Palosios while investigating the hell which was shown to Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) during his Meraj and all the occurrences taking place at the time, came to the conclusion that Dante while writing his work of art had taken advantage of the event of Meraj [33, p.54].

First chapter of the poem consisting of 14 chapters is called "Malik-fi-l Hava" ("The King in the Sky") [11, p.57-63; 36]. Here the living beings created from light and living in the universe are described. The human beings living in this place are morally pure, they are far from sins, and having turned to the slaves of their desires don't wage enmity to one another. Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) during his Meraj, namely his rise to God's abode has been sent back as a rescuer for the humanity. He (the prophet) meets the other prophets having reached the highest peak of humanity, and meets the angels created from light. Even during his visit to Beytu-l Mamur he sees there 7 thousand angels who bid namaz. That's why the sky has always been as the indication of highness of God whom the people with their hands opening to the sky pray for the realization of their unreached hopes and desires. Under the impressions of these imaginations the poet in the first chapter of his poem describes the world which he has set up in his dreams [11, p. 61; 36]:

في عباب الفضاء فوق غيومه فوق نسره ونجمته
حيث بثّ الهوى بشعر نسيمه كل عطره ورقته
موطن الشاعر المخلّق منذ ال بدء لكن بروحه بجسمه

In the depth of universe

Above the eagles, clouds, stars

*With the nice breeze of air
In the place where all the scents spread
There is a home land of a flying poet
With spirits but without body*

In chapter second called “Ruhu-sh Shair” (“Spirits of the poet”) with his own spirits in address to the spirits of other writers write [11, p.69; 36]:

*أي روح في بردة الشعراء رفعتهم على الهواء
أبعدتهم عن عالم الأحياء قربتهم من السماء*

*You, my spirits, you raised the spirits of the poets
to the skies in their own wear
You kept them away from the world of living beings,
brought them in the sky nearer.*

During all the time in all the religious convictions it is believed that the spirits is pure but the body dirties the spirits. And that this world is distinguished with its longing for food and luxury, that’s why most still more sensitive poets, in comparison with other people before the injustice, ruthlessness of the world have become closed to themselves, began to be engaged in asceticism, even saw death as a way to salvation, because they think that when they die, their spirits shall leave their bodies and join God. In fact the poet envies the other living beings for their separation from this substantial world for rising into the skies – to God’s abode, because they have been rescued from all the sufferings which a poet could endure. Thus revealing these thoughts in chapter III of his poem called “Al-Abd” (“a slave”) widely explains [11, p.77; 36]:

*بين روحي وبين جسمي الأسير كان بُعْدُ نَفْتِ مُرّه
أنا في الأرض وهي فوق الأثير أنا عبد وهي حرّه
أنا عبد الحياة والموت أمشي مكرهاً من مُهَوِّدِهَا لِقَبْرِه*

*Between my spirits and my captive body
There is farness which I tasted as bitter
I am on the Earth, it is in the skies, I am a captive, but it is free
I am a slave of life and of death, I wonder
Gloomily between the cradle and the grave*

In chapter IV called “Hilm and Hagiga” (“Fancy and Truth”) the poet together with birds goes on tour. During the Meraj of Islamic Prophet (s.a.v.) by the will of God rises to the skies with the help of angel Gabriel. The fact that the poets for rising up to the skies plead for help from the birds is one of the factors which remind us of Meraj [36]:

يا طيور السماء في الريح روعي بي جريا على الجلد
وبجسمي طيري إلى حيث روعي فيه تحيا بلا جسد

You, birds in the sky fly together with me, in the place where your spirits is situated above your body and in the place where you live without your body.

His Majesty Mohammed (s.a.v.) when rising up to the skies with the help of angel Gabriel (a.s.) they interrogate Gabriel (a.s.) to know who the person beside him is and when they learn that he is Mohammed (s.a.v.) they greet him. The poet too flying together with the birds up to the sky in chapter V of his poem called "Beyna-t Tuyur" ("Among the birds") first of all is met by birds, but the birds do not recognize him and ask questions to know who he is. Later on the birds understand that he is a human being and has come there in order to emancipate from the sufferings which he exercised on the Earth [11, p.93; 36]:

قال نسر لآخر أي طير هو هذا ومن رفاقه
إن يكن قادماً إلينا لخبر فلماذا علا زعاقه
يا له طائراً بصورة شيطان بيث اللهب بركان صدره
أهو منا لا لا فلم أر جباراً كهذا في الجوّ ما بين طيره

The eagle said to the other: what kind of bird this is which of our friends he is like?

If he has come to us with good will why he is moaning?

You, the one, flying in the wear of devil,

You, the one who blows flame from the mouth

I wonder if he is one from us?

No, I have never seen such a different one from us birds!

In chapter VI called "Ramzu-l Alam" ("Symbol of Grief") the poet talking to the eagles tries to describe himself [36].

In chapter VII called "Gurba-n Nujum" ("Near the Stars") the poet already reaches the world of stars and hears their talks. During the meraj the Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) has reached the 7th layer of the sky and in each layer he talked to this or that prophet and has been praised by the prophets. Poet's walking in the sky stage by stage and his praising himself on behalf of living beings in this or that stage is another example to prove that the poet has been impressed by the event of Meraj. The stars in the sky when seeing the poet do not recognize him. At this time the writer says [11, p.111; 36]:

ايه يا نجمتي ألم تعرفيني شاعراً بنصت الدجى لنواحه
كم ليالٍ في الروض أحبيتها أب كي وأشكو إليك بين أقاحه
Didn't you recognize me, you, my star

I am the poet from the cries of whom darkness has been dead silent

For many nights I waited for you in the garden

Weeping, complaining among the flowers.

In chapter VIII of the poem called “Avrag Mutanasira” (“Falling Trees”) poet’s talks with the stars go on. The poet shares his grief, his inner world his dreams and longings with the stars. In chapter IX of his poem called “Fi Alami-l Arvah” (“World of Spirits”) the poet already reaches the world of spirits [36].

In chapter X called “Hafnatu-t Turab” (“A Handful of soil”) the poet (s.a.v.) was the witness of the talks of spirits on the human beings who came pure to this world and turned to soil afterwards. For them a human being is a piece of soil [11, p.133; 36]:

قال روح حذار يا أترابي واطردوه عن السماء

هو في الأرض حفنة من تراب فأبوه طين وماء

One spirit said:

My friends, push him away from here

He was a piece of soil on the planet Earth

And his father had been mud and soil.

These lines which written by a poet of Christian by birth are evidently known to have been taken from the Holy Koran (Surah al-Imran 3/59; surah al-Hijr, 15/26, 28, 33; surah al-Muminun, 23/12) the event of Meraj and religion of Islam in the creation of the poet which has been reflected is the manifestation of his respect and trust to the religion of Islam.

The poet who heard the conversation of spirits in full speed began to come back to the Earth. On the way back to the Earth he meets one of the well-known literary figures Abu-l Ala al-Maarri and talks to him on pessimism and mourning ceremony. As it is known, Abu-l Ala al-Maarri lived in XI century, and though he was blind his eyes of soul were open and he had written a number of works on philosophical topics. Prominent Azerbaijani orientalist-scientist Malik Mahmudov noted that Abu-l Ala-al-Maarri had been the teacher of Azerbaijani well-known scientist Khatib Tabrizi [37, p.131]. The poet who was persecuted for his philosophical and religious thoughts stated that he had been in three-fold jail (his being blind, the spirits’ being in an ugly body, his being compelled to live as a prisoner in his own house) [37,p.131]. Abu-l Ala al-Maarri’s will in which he asked the following words to be written on his grave stone helps us to understand his behaviour to the existing world [37,p.132]:

هذا جناه ابي علي و ما جنيت على احد

*This is the grave of a person whose father has brought him to this world as a result of
committing a crime. I have committed no crime against anybody.*

In Abu-l Ala al-Maarri’s work “Risalatul- Ghufraan” (“A Booklet on forgiveness”), too, a tour to the sky, description of paradise and hell had taken place. The writer in his time was accused for having no religion. In fact as a number of poets he himself was not against the religion. He had always been against the use of religion in ruling over the people, performing unjust actions under the name of religion. He had always been against a blind worship to religion but always tried to understand the inner contents of a number of religious convictions. As Fevzi al-Maluf felt himself spiritually close to the poets, Abu-l Ala al-Maari is confident to understand him better. Already in this world to meet the poet whose spirits are in the heavens consoles Fevzi al-Maluf’s soul.

In chapter XI called “Rugiyy Kazib” (“An imaginary rise”) negative, evil actions, features are described and condemned. In fact the poet by this poem tries to caution his readers to avoid doing such things, be just, morally pure and lead honest life.

Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) during his Meraj comes across Prophet Adam (a.s.). Prophet Adam when looking at his right side rejoices, but when he looks at his left side he grieves. When Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v) asks its reason in an answer to the question Prophet Adam states that the people on his right side are the people who with their good deeds have been chosen as the ones to be sent to paradise, but the people on his left are the people to be sent to hell.

Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) also mentioned that “*during the Meraj I saw a crowd of people who were gnawing the insects and walls of the hell*”. When the prophet (s.a.v.) asked the reason Gabriel (a.s.) answered that they were the people who had not given alms from their gainings to the poor.

After that Prophet (s.a.v.) sees a crowd of people who want to lift a bundle of wood but they can't lift it. They still make the bundle heavier and heavier and can't lift it. When the Prophet (s.a.v.) asks Gabriel (a.s.) on the reason of this, he answers: “*These are the people who borrow money from other people but do not pay it back. This borrowed money makes their loads heavier and heavier*” [33, p.52]. Fevzi al-Maluf too understands that human beings are existence who do more sins than other beings and ask them to be just and honest [36]:

أنا عن وصف شره عاجز وال له مهما أفضت في تبيانه
ما دعوه الإنسان من أنسه ل كن دعوه الإنسان من نسيانه
نسي الخير حين أوغل في الشر فداست الضمير في عصيانه

The more I speak of their sins, the more I am unable to speak of them all!

They didn't name them as human beings

They forget all the sins when they called them human beings

They forgot the good, dived into evil doing

In all their protests they seemed to have lost their honour.

Chapter XII of the poetry “Ala Bisati-r Rih” is called “Kaffaratu-sh Shair” (“Making the poet free”). Here the poet deals with his meeting with his own spirits. In chapter XIII of his poem called “Ala Bisati-r Rih” (“On the flying carpet”) the poet already has faced his spirits. He joins his best and close friend – his spirits. The poet has already morally been refined. Without any limitation he observes the world together with his spirits [36]. In chapter XIV called “Al-Auda ila-l Ard” (“Return to the surface of the earth”) the poet returning from the world of dreams into the substantial world finds himself, but his spirits not desiring to return from the pure world into the dirty one, leaves the poet alone [11,p.165; 36]:

تلك بضع من الدقائق مرّت في خضمّ من الخلود
هي مثل الأحلام زارت وفرت أي حلم ترى يعود
وإذا بي أهوى إلى الأرض وحدي بعد حرّيتي أكابد رقاً
تركتني روعي وعادت لمأواها تشقّ الشعاع في الجوّ شقاً

Some minutes passed in the ocean of eternity

It came as a dream,

But no dream came back from emancipation of the soul
After the gained freedom I see myself only then when I am flying
I struggle against slavery
Frustrating the beams in the sky
My spirits left me, left me alone.

His Majesty Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) after exercising the event of Meraj and coming back to the Earth, the people around him did not believe in the truthfulness of this event, they supposed that the Prophet (s.a.v.) had dreamt about. But by the will of God the truthfulness of this event had been proved. The poet, who had longed for being morally emperured, for a short period of time at least tries to be free in his dreams.

One of the reasons why God had made Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) exercise this event is a struggle against slavery, including to show non-superiority of one person above the other, to state the fact that the all human beings shall be paid for all that they do in this world. Prophet (s.a.v.) had always stated that any person is not a slave of another person and challenged all the people not to be slaves of their wantings, their indignations, and passions and not to be slaves to devil. The poet too in the work which came under his pen addresses to the readers and challenges them to be right, just, not to be slaves to only eating food existing in the Earth.

The contents of the poem “Ala Bisati-r Rih” by its style is one of the distinguished specimens of Arabic literature. The poem which the poet masterfully wrote takes his readers in a short period of time to the world of dreams. This is the world which is far from rightness, unjust world, full of sufferings.

Fevzi al-Maluf’s borthor, a well-known migration writer Shafig al-Maluf in his poem “Abgar” had touched upon the features of Meraj, especially the occurrences which took place in the paradise and hell which Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) had seen when he returned at the night of Meraj. So in the religious stories it is informed of the fact that Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) had been shown the hell and paradise had been described by Prophet (s.a.v.) also the things which will take place in the hell shall be applied to each of the deeds which a human being has committed in this world and all the forms of punishment have been exactly indicated in these religious stories.

Shafig al-Maluf too in his poem “Abgar” deals with his tour to an unreal world together with the people whom the devils and deuces had made committing sins and describes the things which he had seen in that imaginary world. The poet tries to describe the occurrences in the form of imagination as much as a human brain can understand, all of which His Majesty Mohammed (s.a.v.) had exercised in reality. In fact the message which the prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) wanted to convey has been conveyed to the human-beings by the imaginary tour of the poet with which he had morally exercised.

The contents of the poem “Abgar” are very interesting. Abgar is a village in which jinn lived. In this village which is far from the real world, where sinful people lived, jinn, ogres, birds, fortune-tellers, poetry-devils and poets live [38, p.155]. Each reader of the poet while diving into the world of imagination created by the poet, in fact faces the occurrences which really take place on the planet Earth. Here the hypocrisy and unjust which take place in the Earth are criticized by the tongue of devils, jinn and birds. The poem consists of twelve parts. In first part which is called “Fi Tarig-i Abgar” (“On the way of Abgar”) the poet’s tour to the country of jinn and to the cities of wonders are described [38, p.155].

As it has been mentioned “Abgar” is a village in which jinn lived and is a utopic village which does not exist in the world at all. Here it is narrated that all the poets here are devils and tell the poems by the way of inspiration. Actually this thought existed at the preislamic period. So the people who lived in preislamic period believed that poets were different from ordinary people and that each of them had his own jinnee. As to them, each jinnee was the source of inspiration of each poet. Shafiq al-Maluf who knew classic Arab literature well reflects this thought in his poem “Abgar”. The poet together with his jinnee tours around this country of jinn.

In chapter second of the poem which is called “Al-Ilahu-n Nags” (“Half God”) the tour in the country of jinn goes on. After a little while the poet continuing his tour, together with his jinnee in the third chapter of his poem called “Hasratu-r Ruh” (“Longing of Spirits”) the poet comes to a place in which existed too much voluptuousness [38, p.168, 183]. But as the poet doesn’t like this place, he asks his jinnee to take him away from there.

In chapter IV called “Nahru-l Ghayy” (“River of Sin”) and in chapter V called “Vadi Sijjin” (“Valley of Sijjin”) the poet has his readers travelled to hell in the imaginary world [38,184]. The river of Sin is situated in the hell. First of all the poet gives the description of the river of sin and valley of Sijjin. Too many deuces live in the valley of Sijjin. Here the poet comes across the blind deuce Sarhub. Sarhub is the guard of river of sin. Sarhub with hand stick strikes the sea and the sea separates into the two parts and between them many passages are seen. Naturally here we can clearly see the episode which took place in the life of Prophet Moses (a.s.). As it has been mentioned in Holy Koran Prophet Moses (a.s.) too in order, to free the Jewish people from the yoke of Egyptian Pharaoh while having them run away, they face a great obstacle – a sea. Behind them the Pharaoh and his forces follow them. At this time the people of Prophet Moses (a.s.) are in excitement. By this time an order to Prophet Moses (a.s.) is given by God to hit his hand stick on the sea. When Prophet Moses bids the order the sea is divided into the two parts and through the created dry passage Prophet Moses (a.s.) and his people safe and sound pass to the opposite part of the sea (Surah ash-Shuara, 63-68).

The poet who travelled to the world of dreams gets into one of the passages in the sea having been created by the touch of the hand stick of Sarhub and travels through this passage in the darkness and becomes the witness of the occurrences taking place in the place. In the event of Meraj, too, when His Majesty Mohammed (s.a.v.) together with his majesty Gabriel (a.s.) stand at the gate of the hell and when he asks them to show him the hell he is shown. Prophet (s.a.v.) describes the hell like this:

“Hell consists of seven layers. In each layer of it there are people who burn as to their sins committed in this world. I could not stand watching the tortures of the people in the lower layer. I only observed those who were in the upper layers of the hell. Here there are 70 seas of fire and beside each sea there is a city of flames and in each city there are 70 thousand houses of flames. In each house there are 70 thousand trunks of flames. There are men and women in these trunks. Beside them there are snakes and scorpions”. When I asked Malik who these people are, he said: “These are the people who having tortured people have robbed their goods [39]”.

As it is seen the fact that His Majesty Mohammed (s.a.v.) described the hell, the poet, too, imaginarily describes the hell. In the hell the poet also meets another devil Sabar. Sabar is the devil of war. He nourishes with the flesh of human beings. Here the poet tries to show that the wars causing the deaths of millions of people fighting for thousands of years for land, power, wealth, treasure and so on is the manifestation of the victory of devil on the human beings.

A little later the poet meets the devil of lust Avar. Prophet of Islam Mohammed (s.a.v.) states that he has seen a

group of women and men burning in a copper pot for having committed adultery. The poet too here states that the people who didn't lead morally pure life and those who led the way of life of devils, their place is hell of which Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) wanted to warn the human beings.

The poet describing the devils in the world of dreams tried to warn all the people in the Earth. As to the poet within any person a devil is hidden. The fact that the devil is ruling over a human being happens as a result of the very person's being greedy, weak, unjust, loss of will and loss of honour. That's why each person must be able to suppress the negative feelings in him/her, mustn't surrender to the call of his longings. Thus as it has been mentioned in Holy Koran when Allah created human beings on the Earth in spite of the fact that Allah ordered the angels and devils to serve the human beings, the devil which was created from the flame wouldn't obey Allah's order, considered itself higher than the human beings who were created from the mud and so, the devil caused God's anger and have been pushed away from paradise. The devil in its turn promised that it would do its best to lead to the wrong way all the human beings as long as to the doom's day (surah al-Araf , 11-13). The devils which the poet described in his poem were the devils which were able to lead to the wrong way of those kinds of human beings who were weak, weak-willed, unjust, who had lost their sense of honour. Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) during his Meraj dealing with human beings to be burnt in the flame of hell stated: *“I saw a group of people who being thirsty asked for water. To satisfy their longings they were given boiling water in the cups made of flames. While drinking these waters at first their flesh on their faces and the flesh in their bodies were burning”. When he asked who they were, Malik answered that they were the ones who drank wine [39]”*.

“I saw a group of women and men who were beaten with whips made of fire. They were the ones who protested against their fathers and mothers [39]”.

The poet too in order to free the human beings from the flame of the hell challenges them to lead right way of life. In chapter VI of his poem called “Al-Havjal va-l Havbar” and in chapter VII called “Hilmu Hura (“Hura's dreams”) the poet meets other devils [38, p.229]. In the chapter “Hilmu Hura” the poet meets a devil named by Hura. This devil which rules over negative dreams and thoughts speaks of the fact of the breast of Umayya bin Abi Salt to be splintered, of his heart's being removed from the chest and being put back in its place again. Prominent Arab philosopher and historian ibn Khaldun mentioned that Umayya ibn Abi Salt had been a priest during the pre-islamic period. After the Islamic religion was established he had refused accepting this religion and had claimed to be a prophet himself [40, p.174-175].

In chapter VII named “Hikmatu-l Kuhhan” (“the true words of the priests”) the poet talks to Shig and Satih talks to the poet on the importance of the human spirits and stresses the fact that body is an obstacle in the way of perfection of the spirits.

Shig and Satih whom the poet met there were the priests who had lived in the preislamic period. The art of priest was famous among the Arabs before the foundation of the religion of Islam in the Arabic peninsula. Thus, Arabs residing under the heavy conditions of climate and household always longed for learning what would happen in future and for that they appealed to the priests. It is stated that the physical structure of bodies of the priests Shig and Satih residing at the time were different too. The priest by the name of Shig had half body – one hand, one foot and one eye. But the famous priest Satih from Damascus had no bone, had his face on the breast and who lived a long life [41, p.212]. As to the version the ruler of Kasra (Persia) in order to tell a slumber had sent his scientist called Muyzan to the priest Satih. Satih telling the slumber stated of appearing of Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) [42, p.71].

As it was known the religion of Islam's attitude to fortune-telling was negative and it was stated that those who were engaged in fortune telling were associated with jinn. That's why the religion of Islam forbids foreseeing. Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) stated to keep away from the seven sins and among them is fortune-telling [31, p.92]. Shafiq al-Maluf expresses too his confidence to meet the priest of the time, as the prophet of Islam had mentioned in the hell and see them burning.

In chapter IX called "Sauratu-l Baghaya" ("Uprising of the Prostitutes") the poet sees naked prostitutes in the wood of whores [38, p.255]. The devil states as they had no bodies in the hell being unable to exercise the feeling of love they suffer. It was mentioned in a number of religious stories that Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) during his Meraj had seen adulterers among the people of hell and that they were most severely punished. At the same time Prophet (s.a.v.) had mentioned that adultery was one of the biggest sins [31, p.92]. This is one of the situations which reminds us of the event of Meraj.

In chapter X called 'Al-Anga' the poet meets a legendary bird by the name of Anga and its two bodies called Rukh and Faynig [38, p.269]. As to the legend the bird Rukh while flying covers the sun with its wings. Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) too while speaking of the event of Meraj tells that the angel Gabriel had two large wings.

Chapter XI of the poem "Abgar" is called "Ahadis-u Khurafa" ("Talks of Khurafa"). In this chapter it is spoken of Khurafa's being cheated by a jinnee and being taken to the country of jinn and after a while he was pushed away from the country of jinn. After Khurafa comes back and joins the human beings, speaks of the events which he had exercised while being in the country of jinn but nobody trusted him. As it has been mentioned, dealing with the event of Meraj, Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.), too, when talked of the events which he had seen there the people around him at first did not believe in him. This situation in the poem shows us that the poet has been impressed by the event of Meraj.

In chapter XII of the poem called "Abgariyyun" ("The Abgars") namely in the last chapter the poet already leaves Abgar and calmly goes to a field. The poet who sees the marrowbones of the people of Abgar here, he begins to talk to these marrowbones. With this the poet's tour to the world of dreams comes to an end. In this poem which has artfully come under the pen of the poet in the philosophical theme, the poet's life and his thoughts about the human beings have been reflected. There are too many creative imaginations and interesting episodes in the poem.

Each reader who is well acquainted with the event of Meraj and those who have read the poems "Ala Bisati-r Rih", "Abgar" can easily distinguish the influence of Prophet Mohammed's (s.a.v.) event of Meraj which Prophet (s.a.v.) had exercised. The thoughts of justice and equality which Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) and his religion Islam tried to spread among the people stands in the background of life philosophy, the thoughts and mode of life of Fevzi al-Maluf. Though both of the poets were Christians by religion, having much respect for the religion of Islam and seeing Islam as the religion of humanism, their writing on the religion of Islam in their creative activity, their being influenced by the event of Meraj of Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.) and their depiction of the basic principles of the religion of Islam can be met as a normal case because they understand that each divine religion serves humanity. We must note that one of the major duties of each writer is to lighten and give knowledge to the people by the work that a writer writes, to show people a correct way of life. Fevzi al-Maluf and Shafiq al-Maluf being influenced by the event of Meraj of Prophet Mohammed (s.a.v.), by writing the poems "Abgar" and "Ala Bisati-r Rih" persuade the aim of making the human beings perfect and of showing them the right way how to live honestly and fairly

CONCLUSIONS

One of the reasons of migration of Arab writers, who moved to the South and North America and created the Arab Mahjar literature was the lack of religious tolerance in their motherland and the will to be far from the religious conflicts. The famous representatives of the Arab Mahjar poetry of the South America Shafiq al-Maluf and Favzi al-Maluf understood the chaos in their own countries resulted by the religious conflicts which served to the national interests of the foreign powers and in order to prevent them tried to reflect in their poems the power of Allah and the main goals of all the prophets, which are the principles of peace, equality, prosperity and justice among all the people regardless of their race, nationality and gender. The impact of the “Meraj” event lived by the Muslim Prophet Mohammad (s.a.v) is seen clearly within the poems “Ale Bisat-ir Rih” by Favzi al-Maluf who had Christian origins and “Abqar” by Shafiq al-Maluf who had Christian origins too. Both these poems are very important in terms of relevance for the modern society. In the world of wide spread Islamophobia, both poets try to deliver to the people that one is guilty not because of religious affiliation but because of his negative behaviour and will get the punishment for that negative actions both while in live and after the death.

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